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ABSTRACT

Early research into women's political participation assumed erroneously that gender was more important than race, ethnicity, and class, that uniform commitment on women's issues would occur, and that only female officeholders could represent women. Based on attitudinal, participatory, and electoral data collected in Houston, Texas in 1977-78, this research paper measures political knowledge, information, and participation in local government only. Throughout the paper the same findings occur; political maturation enhances diversity of political opinion and participatory activities rather than homogeniety. After women's original goal was obtained, cross pressures caused by basic value differences conflicted and polarization was the result. Women did not become the same type of cohesive bloc-voting group as are racial, ethnic, and economic-based groups because socioeconomic factors, rather than gender, were their primary political cues. Fifteen data tables illustrate the research. (Author/CK)

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THE POLITICAL POLARIZATION OF WOMEN: WHERE POLITICAL SCIENTISTS WENT WRONG

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THE POLITICAL POLARIZATION OF WOMEN: WHERE POLITICAL SCIENTISTS WENT WRONG

INTRODUCTION

What is happening to "women" as a political force? The increasing polarization of women into liberal and conservative camps[1] has frustrated and confused many scholars and activists alike who had predicted the "great moblization" of women into a political force of equal or greater magnitude than racial, ethnic, or economic groups. However, this "polarization" should have been anticipated by persons familiar with the basic tenets of political participation in the United States. Long ago V.O. Key in his classic work Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups stated:

> "Women, as women, have few common political interests, and, hence, women's organizations often have difficulty in finding issues in which their members have a joint concern and in avoiding issues that generate schisms. Women's groups with a multiclass membership maintain unity on only the most innocuous matters. Women's groups with a class membership, however, can push for sharply-defined objectives without threatening their unity."[2]

The more recent research on women's participation in politics has largely been directed toward the participation of women (liberal women) in the "women's movement." Unfortunately, the results of much of this research have been generalized as being applicable to the political participatory activities of all women. Such generalizations have made the "cold realities" of increased polarization tremendously difficult for the liberal, women's rights groups to understand or accept. What is needed is a more balanced look at women's political participation--inclusive of the traditional women's clubs and civic organizations. This research gives a somewhat different interpretation of women's political participation. It identifies the pitfalls of generalizing the results of earlier research to women as a whole by using attitudinal, pressure group activity, and electoral data collected in Houston, Texas in 1977-78.

WEAKNESSES OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick in her seminal work Political Woman stated that "the most important and interesting question about women's political role is why that role is so insignificant."[3] The early literature tended to measure the significance of women's political role in terms of participation rates (political group; candidacy; voting) and in terms of the electoral success of female candidates. It usually focused on women's role in national[4] or state[5] politics as opposed to local politics.[6] The major shortcoming of most of these studies was the conclusion, or prediction, that things would get better once "women" had their consciousness' raised and became educated as to the importance of political participation. Implicit in this prescription for a greater political role were several erroneous and rather naive assumptions.

The first of these erroneous assumptions was that gender would become a more important voting cue than race, ethnicity, or class. Even though Kirkpatrick readily acknowledged that "everyone is an incumbent of multiple roles,"[7] the hope was still that gender could somehow be made the predominant role. More critically, the assumption was that "women," once properly educated, would be the same type of cohesive group as Blacks or Mexican-Americans, bound together by the common goal of fighting economic discrimination. It is not until the work of Chafe[8] and Hansen[9] that attitudinal testing revealed that "the preference of women [is] structured along social-class, political party, or religious lines, not according to sex"[10] (author's emphasis), even though Key had argued that this was the case many years earlier.

A second erroneous assumption was that once this educational and moblization process had peaked, "women" would work for the same policy goals;

there would be a uniform commitment to pressure for certain expressly "women's issues" and, because "women" make up over half the electorate, passage of such issues would become routine. Again, Key's earlier findings seem to have been ignored. Rather than stimulating homogeneity of opinion among women, the increase in women's knowledge about various issues has stimulated diversity of opinion--and this opinion formation has been more the product of educational, racial, and/or class differences than of gender.

Another rather costly assumption evident in much of the literature is that only female officeholders can represent "women" and that anything short of numbers proportional to the female proportion of the total population is both inequitable and unacceptable. Demanding election of a woman for the sake of a woman is in effect opting for symbolic representation rather than programmatic representation--a rather short-sighted position. As polarization becomes more evident, it is clear that electing a woman simply because of her gender and irrespective of her policy stances is politically-naive.

In summary, the prescriptions for making "women" into a cohesive, bloc-voting political group have largely been written by liberal, activist women who label themselves "feminists." These women have ignored the ramifications of the political maturation process which works to enhance diversity rather than to diminish it. The political maturation of any non-socioeconomically-defined group tends to result in polarization rather than cohesion.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is based upon attitudinal, participatory, and electoral data collected in one of the nation's largest metropolitan areas--Houston, Texas,

in 1977-78. The purpose of this research is to illustrate the inability of earlier studies to explain the increasing polarization of "women" into liberal and conservative political groups or, conversely, the dimunition of the effectiveness of "women" as a single political group. Such investigations are necessary at all levels of government in order to better understand why "women" will likely never become a viable political group of the same order as racial, ethnic, or economic-based groups.

The Data

The socioeconomic heterogeneity of "women" effectively prohibits the formation of one political group representative of all "women." The data collected in Houston highlight the diversification of both political opinions and participatory activities accompanying the political maturation of women.

Diversity of opinion and of political participatory activities are both directly related to variation in women's level of understanding of the political system itself. To demonstrate this diversity in level of knowledge and in source of knowledge, questionnaires were administered to one hundred females[11] asking them to: (1) rank their relative knowledge of the four types of local government existing in the Houston area (City government--City of Houston; County government--County of Harris; School District; Other Special Districts--hospital; mosquito control; flood control; water; etc.); (2) rank their level of knowledge (Very Good: Good; Fair; Weak; Poor) of the two most visible local governments--City and County; and (3) rank the sources of information (television; radio; newspaper; neighborhood civic association; political organization; place of employment; educational institution; church; and other) they rely upon most for their knowledge of city and county governments respectively.

Diversity of opinion and of political activities is also measured in terms of both the number and type of groups formally organized to promote "women's issues" and by the public issue stances taken by various women's groups. Data used to demonstrate this type of diversity were obtained from: (1) a membership list of Women In Action (WIA)--an umbrella organization composed primarily of civic- and service-type women's groups; (2) a membership list of the Women's Rights Coordinating Council (WRCC)--an umbrella organization largely composed of feminist-type women's groups; and (3) media identification of individual women's groups, including ultra-conservative groups, who participated in formal public debates surrounding the "women's rights" activities of the City's former Women's Advocate, Dr. Nikki R. Van Hightower.[12] (Van Hightower's women's rights activities included promotion of abortion rights life-style choice rights, and passage of the ERA.)

Finally, the diversity of Houston women's direct political activities is demonstrated by candidacy rates, endorsement (slating) activities, and election results collected for city, county, and school district elections in 1977 and 1978.

DIVERSITY OF LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Some people are interested in politics; others are not. Some people form an elected official's "attentive constituency;"[13] others are not part of that elite group. The authors of one of the leading basic American government textbooks on the market today carefully point out that "there is nothing about democracy that guarantees an alert, educated public. Like voting and other forms of political participation, knowledge of public affairs...is largely up to the individual."[14]

One of the prerequisites of "women" becoming a cohesive, bloc voting group (if one accepts this as being a realistic expectation) is the reaching of a certain level of knowledge of the political system and the achieving of some uniformity in reliance upon specific sources of information regarding

the system. If political officials are ever to be influenced by "women" as a block, they must first be convinced of the superior level of political activism of this constituency (women) relative to other groups vying for an influential position in the political system. This activism is, of course, dependent upon knowledge of how the system operates as well as confidence in the ability to apply this knowledge. Officials must also be aware of this constituency's major means of communicating information both to and from their membership and the elected official.

The purpose of administering a questionnaire to one hundred women of differing racial and ethnic, social class, and employment backgrounds, asking them to rank their relative knowledge of various local governments, and asking them to identify their major sources of information regarding these governments was to determine whether such knowledge and informational sources were common among all women, regardless of socioeconomic background. In other words, the purpose was to determine the weight of gender relative to race and ethnicity, and social class (measured by educational attainment) with regard to both level of knowledge and source of knowledge about local politics.

Self-Ranking of Relative Knowledge of Local Governments

One of the basic weaknesses of political science thus far has been the aggregating of all governments other than national and state into a broad, unwieldy category labeled "local government." This has rendered much of the information produced by such studies useless from the standpoint of political practioners. The variation in geographical boundaries alone (of city, county, special district governments) mandates different political strategies on the part of both those seeking to be elected and those seeking to influence public policy. In other words, the failure to recognize the ramifications of fragmentation for the effectiveness of pressure groups can

be a costly political oversight. Women's groups, both liberal and conservative, have tended to solicit members from across the multitude of governmental jurisdictions within a single metropolitan area. But, they have tended to use the same strategies in dealing with different governmental units. It will be shown here that such strategies are in error due to variations in the composition of the "attentive constituencies" of various governmental units and in the informational sources relied upon by them.

It is clear from the information presented in Table 1 that the women who responded to the questionnaire know most about city and county

(Table 1 About Here)

governments and least about school district and other special district governments. However, the danger of aggregating such responses becomes obvious when the responses are analyzed by race and ethnicity (Table 2) and social class (Table 3). It is clear after such analyses that rankings are affected by race and ethnicity and social class. Specifically, a greater percentage of black women rank their knowledge of city government as best (42.9%) than white (36.4%) or brown (33.3%) women. However, a greater percentage of white women rank their knowledge of county government as best (42.4%) as opposed to 35.7% of black and 0% of Mexican-American women. (See Table 2.) Not so ironically, these results closely coincide

(Table 2 About Here)

with the racial and ethnic makeup of geographical districts of these governments and the relative electoral successes of these racial and ethnic groups in these governments.[15] Blacks and browns have been much more successful in influencing and winning elections in the city as opposed to the county. Clearly, then, the data suggest that there is a direct linkage

TABLE 1

SELF-RANKING OF RELATIVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: ALL RESPONDENTS

Local Government	Relative Knowledge			
	Most	Second	Third	Least
City Government	38.0%	42.0%	12.0%	8.0%
County Government	38.0	30.0	26.0	6.0
School District	18.0	20.0	50.0	12.0
Special Districts	6.0	8.0	12.0	74.0

NOTE: Includes respondents who ranked knowledge of all four types of government.

TABLE 2

SELF-RANKING OF RELATIVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BY RACE

Local Government & Ranking	Race		
	Blacks	Mex. Ams.	Whites
CITY GOVERNMENT			
Most	42.9%	33.3%	36.4%
Second	28.6	33.3	48.5
Third	21.4	0	9.1
Least	7.1	33.3	6.1
COUNTY GOVERNMENT			
Most	35.7%	0%	42.4%
Second	42.9	33.3	24.2
Third	21.4	33.3	27.3
Least	0	33.3	6.1
SCHOOL DISTRICT			
Most	14.3%	33.3%	18.2%
Second	21.4	0	21.2
Third	57.1	66.7	45.5
Least	7.1	0	15.2
SPECIAL DISTRICT			
Most	7.1%	33.3%	3.0%
Second	7.1	33.3	6.1
Third	0	0	18.2
Least	85.7	33.3	72.7

NOTE: Includes respondents who ranked knowledge of all four types of government.

between knowledge and participation rates.

Similar results are evident when respondents are analyzed by educational level (Table 3). The most obvious example of how education affects respondents' rankings of their relative knowledge of local governments is their ranking of school district governments. Those with an undergraduate degree

(Table 3 About Here)

or better are much more likely to rate their knowledge of school district governments higher in relation to other local governments than are those with little or no college education.

In summary, the point is that different women form different attentive constituencies for the various local governments--mostly the result of racial, ethnic, and/or social class experiences as opposed to mere biological factors (gender).

Self-Rating of Level of Knowledge of City and County Governments

Political participation increases as the chances of influencing the outcome of an election and/or of influencing the elected official's policy-making activities increase--or are perceived as increasing by those attempting to exert such influence.[16] To measure the intensity, or depth, of these respondents' perceptions of their knowledge of the two most visible local governments (city, county), the women were asked to decide whether their knowledge of the specific government was: Very Good; Good; Fair; Weak; or Poor. Those ranking themselves as more knowledgeable are, of course, more likely to be or become part of the elected official's attentive constituency.[17]

Table 4 figures reveal that a great deal of consistency appears among the respondents in aggregate as to their self-perceptions of governmental

(Table 4 About Here)

TABLE 3

SELF-RANKING OF RELATIVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Government & Ranking	Educational Level						
	High School Degree	Bus., Voc., Other Spec. Training	Some College	Undergrad. Degree	Add. Hours Beyond Under-grad. Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
CITY GOVERNMENT							
Most	0%	50.0%	40.0%	41.7%	25.0%	50.0%	0%
Second	100.0	25.0	30.0	33.3	62.5	40.0	100.0
Third	0	25.0	20.0	8.3	0	10.0	0
Least	0	0	10.0	16.7	12.5	0	0
COUNTY GOVERNMENT							
Most	100.0%	50.0%	60.0%	25.0%	25.0%	20.0%	0%
Second	0	37.5	30.0	41.7	37.5	20.0	0
Third	0	0	10.0	33.3	37.5	40.0	100.0
Least	0	12.5	0	0	0	20.0	0
SCHOOL DISTRICT							
Most	0%	0%	0%	25.0%	37.5%	20.0%	100.0%
Second	0	25.0	30.0	8.3	0	40.0	0
Third	50.0	62.5	70.0	41.7	50.0	40.0	0
Least	50.0	12.5	0	25.0	12.5	0	0
SPECIAL DISTRICT							
Most	0%	0%	0%	8.3%	12.5%	10.0%	0%
Second	0	12.5	10.0	16.7	0	0	0
Third	50.0	12.5	0	16.7	12.5	10.0	0
Least	50.0	75.0	90.0	58.3	75.0	80.0	100.0

NOTE: Includes respondents who ranked knowledge of all four types of government.

TABLE 4

SELF-RATING OF LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS: ALL RESPONDENTS

Government	Level of Knowledge				
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Weak	Poor
CITY GOVERNMENT (n=75)	12.0%	30.7%	44.0%	10.7%	2.7%
COUNTY GOVERNMENT (n=81)	12.3	32.1	32.1	17.3	6.2

knowledge. Less than half regard their knowledge of city or county government as Good or Very Good. This is particularly distressing for those hoping to mobilize women in light of the fact that these respondents are more likely to be politically aware than the average female,[18] indicating a very low level of self-confidence regarding political affairs among the majority of females in the population.

Again, however, the findings change significantly when analyzed by race and ethnicity, and social class (Tables 5 and 6). As the figures in Table 5 show, there is diversity not only in rankings of level of knowledge by race and ethnicity, but in these group' rankings of knowledge of the two governmental units. For example, a greater percentage of black (12.5%) and brown (20.0%) women than white women (10.9%) rank their

(Table 5 About Here)

knowledge of city government as Very Good. On the other hand, a much larger proportion of white females rate their knowledge of county government as Very Good (17.0%) than do Mexican-American females (10.0%) or black females (4.0%). These findings, again, are quite consistent with the political realities of Houston and Harris County. Blacks and browns, where they have been successful, have been so in city politics, not county politics.

Higher rankings of knowledge about local governments tend to be associated with women who have had more education. Table 6 figures indicate

(Table 6 About Here)

that a greater proportion of those women with more education regard their knowledge of city and county government as Very Good or Good than do those with lesser education.

TABLE 5

SELF-RATING OF LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BY RACE

Government/Race	Level of Knowledge				
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Weak	Poor
CITY GOVERNMENT					
Blacks (n=24)	12.5%	25.0%	45.8%	12.5%	4.2%
Mexican-Americans (n=5)	20.0	40.0	40.0	0	0
Whites (n=46)	10.9	32.6	43.5	10.9	2.2
COUNTY GOVERNMENT					
Blacks (n=25)	4.0%	36.0%	36.0%	20.0%	4.0%
Mexican-Americans (n=5)	0	0	80.0	0	20.0
Whites (n=47)	17.0	31.9	25.5	19.1	6.4

TABLE 6

SELF-RATING OF LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BY EDUCATION

Government/Education	Level of Knowledge				
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Weak	Poor
CITY GOVERNMENT					
High School Degree (n=5)	0%	20.0%	80.0%	0%	0%
Business, Vocational, or Other Specialized Training (n=10)	10.0	30.0	40.0	20.0	0
Some College (n=16)	12.5	18.8	62.5	0	6.3
Undergraduate Degree (n=20)	15.0	45.0	30.0	5.0	5.0
Additional Hours Beyond Undergraduate Degree (n=12)	8.3	16.7	33.3	41.7	0
Master's Degree (n=14)	14.3	42.9	35.7	7.1	0
Doctoral Degree (n=1)	0	0	100.0	0	0
COUNTY GOVERNMENT					
High School Degree (n=6)	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	0%	0%
Business, Vocational, or Other Specialized Training (n=10)	10.0	30.0	40.0	10.0	10.0
Some College (n=16)	12.5	37.5	43.8	0	6.3
Undergraduate Degree (n=20)	15.0	10.0	35.0	30.0	10.0
Additional Hours Beyond Undergraduate Degree (n=12)	8.3	41.7	16.7	33.3	0
Master's Degree (n=15)	13.3	46.7	13.3	20.0	6.7
Doctoral Degree (n=1)	0	0	100.0	0	0

The significance of these findings are that attentive constituencies vary according to race and ethnicity and social class rather than gender. "Women" are not likely to become <u>one</u> identifiable "attentive constituency" because of their socioeconomic heterogeneity.

DIVERSITY OF SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

"Prerequisite to using the vote as an instrument to affect policy are awareness of what city officials have been doing, knowledge about the possible alternatives, and an understanding of future developments."[19] Unfortunately, little is known of the local governmental information sources relied upon by the citizenry. Such information is important because informational sources create and manipulate the linkage between the citizen, pressure groups, and elected officials. The tendency thus far, however, has been to apply the results of national opinion polls examining citizen information sources to all local governments. For example, Cummings and Wise in their textbook state that "in a modern society, the public forms its opinions largely on the basis of what the mass media--newspapers, television, radio, and magazines--present to it."[20] Even the one textbook that does examine the role of the media in opinion formation at the local level[21] focuses the entire discussion on the media's role in <u>city</u> politics. Likewise, strategies for mobilizing influence have largely been based on the assumption that the same channels of communication are important in all local governments, regardless of variations in form of government, geographical size, and other environmental factors. However, since it has already been shown that citizens' level of knowledge about local governments varies from one local government to another, one must question whether informational sources also vary from one local government to another.

Self-Rankings of Major Informational Sources Regarding City and County Governments

Caraley, in his basic urban textbook, though limiting his discussion to city governments, does state that "the media that are most important in large cities are newspapers with city-wide circulation and television stations that regularly broadcast local news."[22] Their coverage "is by far much more continuous and extensive and their reports and commentary fuller than other communication media that also circulate urban political news within a city (radio, neighborhood daily or weekly newspapers, national mass circulation news magazines.)"[23] The results shown in Table 7 seem to confirm Caraley's hypotheses. Excluding place of employment (a feature of the sample itself),[24] it can be observed that television and

(Table 7 About Here)

newspapers are the two most important sources of information about both city and county governments in Houston. But it is interesting to note that a lesser percentage of the respondents rank newspapers as their most important source of news about county government (18.7%) than for city government (20.3%). A content analysis of the two major newspapers' relative coverage would turn up results consistent with this finding.[25]

It appears (Table 7) that radio and two non-media sources (political organizations, civic associations) are the most relied upon secondary sources of information about city and county governments. However, there are marked variations in reliance upon these secondary informational sources among black, brown, and white women. For knowledge of city politics, for example, both blacks and browns are twice as likely to be influenced by civic associations and political organizations as whites. This is consistent with the heavy influence in City of Houston politics of two black organizations

TABLE 7

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS RANKING INFORMATIONAL SOURCES AMONG FOUR MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Government & Source	Rating of Informational Sources			
	Most Important	Second Most Important	Third Most Important	Fourth Most Important
CITY GOVERNMENT				
Television	21.5%	28.8%	25.0%	15.0%
Radio	7.6	15.4	35.4	20.0
Newspaper	20.3	38.5	22.9	12.5
Civic Association	3.8	5.8	6.3	2.5
Political Organization	6.3	9.6	8.3	15.0
Place of Employment	32.6	1.9	2.1	20.0
Educational Institution	6.3	0	0	12.5
Church	0	0	0	0
Other Sources	2.5	0	0	2.5
	100.0 (n=79)	100.0 (n=52)	100.0 (n=48)	100.0 (n=40)
COUNTY GOVERNMENT				
Television	24.0%	21.1%	25.0%	20.5%
Radio	5.3	12.3	34.6	27.3
Newspaper	18.7	42.1	21.2	6.8
Civic Association	1.3	5.3	1.9	11.4
Political Organization	5.3	14.0	5.8	9.1
Place of Employment	38.7	3.5	9.6	18.2
Educational Institution	4.0	0	0	6.8
Church	1.3	0	1.9	0
Other Sources	1.3	1.8	0	0
	100.0% (n=75)	100.0% (n=57)	100.0% (n=52)	100.0% (n=44)

(BOLD, HCCO)[26] and two brown organizations (LULAC, PASO)[27] which are regarded as important slating groups among candidates for office in the City of Houston.[28] The pattern varies somewhat for sources of knowledge about county government. Civic associations and political organizations (except among black women) are generally less relied upon for knowledge about city government--and this in spite of the fact that county elections are partisan and city elections are nonpartisan! (See Table 8.)

(Table 8 About Here)

Variation in educational experience is also related to variation in reliance upon informational sources. The figures in Table 9 show that those with less formal education are more likely to rely almost exclusively on television, newspapers, and radio for their information about both city

(Table 9 About Here)

and county governmental activities. On the other hand, more educated women tend to be much more diverse in the informational sources upon which they rely. Specifically, civic associations, political organizations, and educational institutions are more likely to be regarded as important informational sources among the more-educated women.

The results of this analysis of the major informational sources relied upon are significant because they demonstrate that women differ in their reliance patterns according to their socioeconomic backgrounds. The next step in the analysis is to determine whether these patterns differ between those women more likely to compose the attentive constituences of various local officials (those ranking their knowledge as Very Good or Good) and those not-so-attuned. (See Table 10.) As it turns out, those women

(Table 10 About Here)

TABLE 8

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS RANKING INFORMATIONAL SOURCES AMONG FOUR MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT BY RACE

Government & Source	Race: Blacks 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Mexican-Americans 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Whites 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
CITY GOVERNMENT												
Television	20.0%	33.3%	23.1%	6.7%	50.0%	0 %	50.0%	0 %	25.0%	28.1%	17.1%	20.8%
Radio	12.0	11.1	38.5	13.3	0	0	50.0	33.3	4.5	15.6	34.3	20.8
Newspaper	28.0	22.2	23.1	13.3	25.0	100.0	0	0	20.5	46.9	22.9	12.5
Civic Association	0	11.1	0	26.7	25.0	0	0	0	2.3	3.1	2.9	8.3
Political Organ.	4.0	16.7	7.7	26.7	0	0	0	33.3	9.1	6.3	8.6	4.2
Place of Employ.	36.0	5.6	7.7	6.7	0	0	0	33.3	34.1	0	14.3	12.5
Educ. Instit.	0	0	0	6.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16.7
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Sources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.5	0	0	4.2
	(n=25)	(n=18)	(n=13)	(n=15)	(n=4)	(n=2)	(n=2)	(n=3)	(n=44)	(n=32)	(n=35)	(n=24)
COUNTY GOVERNMENT												
Television	24.0%	23.5%	6.7%	27.3%	75.0%	20.0%	0 %	0 %	22.2%	22.9%	33.3%	17.2%
Radio	0	11.8	33.3	18.2	0	20.0	33.3	33.3	6.7	11.4	36.4	34.5
Newspaper	20.8	35.3	26.7	0	25.0	40.0	33.3	0	22.2	45.7	18.2	10.3
Civic Association	4.2	11.8	0	18.2	0	0	0	33.3	0	2.9	3.0	6.9
Political Organ.	4.2	17.6	20.0	18.2	0	0	0	33.3	6.7	11.4	0	3.4
Place of Employ.	41.7	0	13.3	9.1	0	0	33.3	0	37.8	5.7	6.1	20.7
Educ. Instit.	0	0	0	9.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.9
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.0	0
Other Sources	0	0	0	0	0	20.0	0	0	4.4	0	0	0
	(n=24)	(n=17)	(n=15)	(n=11)	(n=4)	(n=5)	(n=3)	(n=3)	(n=45)	(n=35)	(n=33)	(n=29)

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TABLE 9

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS RANKING INFORMATIONAL SOURCES AMONG FOUR MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT BY EDUCATION

Government & Source	Education: High School 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Bus., Voc.Training 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Some College 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Undergraduate Degree 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
CITY GOVERNMENT																
Television	33.3%	0 %	0 %	100.0%	0 %	66.7%	40.0%	0 %	20.0%	20.0%	44.4%	12.5%	15.8%	30.8%	30.8%	25.0
Radio	0	0	0	0	25.0	0	40.0	25.0	6.7	20.0	22.2	25.0	10.5	0	38.5	16.7
Newspaper	16.7	100.0	0	0	37.5	33.3	20.0	0	33.3	50.0	0	12.5	31.6	53.8	15.4	8.3
Civic Association	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11.0	0	0	0	7.7	8.3
Pol. Organization	0	0	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	6.7	10.0	11.1	12.5	10.5	15.4	7.7	25.0
Place of Employ.	50.0	0	0	0	37.5	0	0	50.0	33.3	0	11.1	12.5	26.3	0	0	8.3
Educ. Instit.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25.0	0	0	0	25.0	0	0	0	0
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Sources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.3	0	0	8.3
	(n=6)	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=1)	(n=8)	(n=6)	(n=5)	(n=4)	(n=15)	(n=10)	(n=9)	(n=8)	(n=19)	(n=13)	(n=13)	(n=12
COUNTY GOVERNMENT																
Television	50.0%	0 %	50.0%	0 %	30.0%	0 %	50.0%	16.7%	6.7%	0 %	66.7%	33.3%	22.2%	46.2%	15.4%	18.2
Radio	0	33.3	0	100.0	10.0	0	25.0	50.0	13.3	11.1	0	33.3	5.6	15.4	46.2	18.2
Newspaper	0	66.7	50.0	0	20.0	66.7	12.5	0	6.7	55.6	11.1	16.7	38.9	38.5	15.4	0
Civic Association	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11.1	0	0	0	0	7.7	18.2
Pol. Organization	0	0	0	0	0	22.0	0	0	0	22.2	22.2	0	11.1	0	0	27.3
Place of Employ.	50.0	0	0	0	40.0	11.1	12.5	16.7	66.7	0	0	0	16.7	0	7.7	18.2
Educ. Instit.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	0	0	16.7	0	0	0	0
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.7	0
Other Sources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.7	0	0	0	5.6	0	0	0
	(n=6)	(n=3)	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=10)	(n=9)	(n=8)	(n=6)	(n=15)	(n=9)	(n=9)	(n=6)	(n=18)	(n=13)	(n=13)	(n=11

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TABLE 9, Continued.

Government & Source	Education: Hrs. Beyond Undergrad. 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Master's Degree 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Doctoral Degree 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
CITY GOVERNMENT												
Television	36.4%	33.3%	11.1%	14.3%	50.0%	16.7%	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	100.0%	0%
Radio	0	22.2	44.4	14.3	0	33.3	50.0	14.3	0	0	0	100.0
Newspaper	9.1	33.3	44.4	14.3	7.1	25.0	40.0	28.6	100.0	0	0	0
Civic Association	0	11.1	0	0	0	0	10.0	0	0	100.0	0	0
Pol. Organization	18.2	0	0	14.3	0	16.7	0	14.3	0	0	0	0
Place of Employment	27.3	0	0	42.9	42.9	8.3	0	14.3	0	0	0	0
Educational Inst.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28.6	0	0	0	0
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Sources	9.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(n=11)	(n=9)	(n=9)	(n=7)	(n=14)	(n=12)	(n=10)	(n=7)	(n=1)	(n=1)	(n=1)	(n=1)
COUNTY GOVERNMENT												
Television	25.0%	40.0%	0 %	22.2%	46.2%	15.4%	0 %	22.2%	0%	100.0%	0 %	0%
Radio	0	0	55.6	33.3	0	23.1	50.0	22.2	0	0	100.0	0
Newspaper	8.3	40.0	44.4	11.1	30.8	30.8	20.0	11.1	100.0	0	0	0
Civic Association	0	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	22.2	0	0	0	100.0
Pol. Organization	16.7	0	0	11.1	0	23.1	10.0	0	0	0	0	0
Place of Employment	50.0	0	0	11.1	23.1	7.7	20.0	22.2	0	0	0	0
Educational Inst.	0	0	0	11.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Sources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(n=12)	(n=10)	(n=9)	(n=9)	(n=13)	(n=13)	(n=10)	(n=9)	(n=1)	(n=1)	(n=1)	(n=1)

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TABLE 10

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS RANKING INFORMATIONAL SOURCES AMONG FOUR MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT BY SELF-RATING OF LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE

Government & Source	Level of Knowledge: Very Good				Good				Fair				Weak				Poor			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
CITY GOVT.																				
TV	12.5%	0 %	16.7%	50.0%	12.5%	37.5%	26.7%	8.3%	29.0%	29.2%	28.6%	11.8%	50.0%	28.6%	14.3%	0 %	50.0%	0 %	0 %	0 %
Radio	0	28.6	33.3	0	12.5	0	53.3	16.7	9.7	12.5	23.8	35.3	0	42.8	42.9	0	0	0	0	0
Newsp.	0	42.9	16.7	16.6	16.7	43.8	13.3	33.3	32.3	41.7	23.8	0	37.5	28.6	42.9	0	50.0	0	0	0
Civ. Assc.	0	0	16.7	16.6	0	6.3	0	0	0	8.3	9.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pol. Org.	0	28.6	16.7	16.6	8.3	12.5	6.7	16.7	9.7	4.2	9.5	11.8	0	0	0	20.0	0	0	0	0
Pl. Emp.	75.0	0	0	0	50.0	0	0	8.3	19.4	4.2	4.8	23.5	0	0	0	60.0	0	0	0	0
Educ. In.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.3	0	0	0	17.6	0	0	0	20.0	0	0	0	0
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.3	0	0	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(n=8)	(n=7)	(n=6)	(n=6)	(n=24)	(n=16)	(n=15)	(n=12)	(n=31)	(n=24)	(n=21)	(n=17)	(n=8)	(n=7)	(n=7)	(n=5)	(n=2)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=0)
COUNTY GOVT.																				
TV	10.0%	16.6%	33.3%	33.3%	12.5%	19.0%	21.1%	40.0%	30.4%	17.6%	50.0%	9.1%	42.9%	30.8%	7.8%	0 %	60.0%	33.3%	0 %	0 %
Radio	0	16.6	50.0	33.3	0	14.3	21.1	20.0	17.4	11.8	25.0	36.4	0	7.7	53.8	30.0	0	0	66.7	33.3
Newsp.	0	66.7	0	0	12.5	28.6	36.8	13.3	26.1	47.1	25.0	0	42.9	53.8	7.8	0	20.0	33.3	0	33.3
Civ. Assc.	0	0	0	33.3	4.2	9.5	0	0	0	5.9	0	18.2	0	0	7.8	10.0	0	0	0	0
Pol. Org.	0	0	16.7	0	8.3	28.6	10.5	0	4.3	11.8	0	9.1	7.1	0	0	30.0	0	0	0	0
Pl. Emp.	80.0	0	0	0	62.5	0	10.5	6.7	21.7	0	0	27.3	7.1	7.7	15.4	30.0	0	33.3	33.3	33.3
Educ. In.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Church	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.8	0	0	0	0	0
Other	10.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	20.0	0	0	0
	(n=10)	(n=6)	(n=6)	(n=6)	(n=24)	(n=21)	(n=19)	(n=15)	(n=23)	(n=17)	(n=12)	(n=11)	(n=14)	(n=13)	(n=13)	(n=10)	(n=5)	(n=3)	(n=3)	(n=3)

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rating their knowledge as Good or Very Good are less likely to rank television or newspapers first and exclusive in importance as informational sources and are more likely to rate job experience, civic associations, and political organizations among their important sources of information than are women who are less self-confident about their knowledge of local governments. There can be no doubt that the communication channels (linkages) between citizens, groups, and elected officials differ among the gender-group labeled "women". This multiplies the efforts that would be needed to mold "women" into one, cohesive political group. From this data, it appears that the problems of making gender a more important voting cue than race, ethnicity, or other socioeconomic factors at the local government level alone are insurmountable.

DIVERSITY IN POLICY GOALS: PINK LADIES vs. FEMINISTS

The predominance of socioeconomic cues (race, ethnicity, class) over biological (gender) cues becomes increasingly obvious after the initial movement of a group into the forefront of the political system. This is primarily because the initial unifying thread is some broad goal which all members can ideologically agree with (e.g. equal opportunity for women). It is at the stage when the means and methods (the how to's) of reaching that goal are being determined by the group's membership that divergence of opinion among them becomes increasingly obvious. It is also at this stage of the political maturation process that members are subjected to "cross pressures"; they find themselves in situations where certain basic values come into conflict. (Perhaps the best example is a Catholic women's group dealing with abortion rights.) It is at this point that socioeconomic cues begin to take precedence over any identification with the original,

unifying goal. It is at this stage when smaller groups, with more homogeneous memberships, are formed to accommodate this diversity (e.g. pro-abortion and anti-abortion groups). Each group claims to represent the original, broader group (i.e. "women").

The point has been made that the political maturation of a broadly-defined group (such as women) can result in polarization as the socioeconomic backgrounds of the membership begin to influence the decisions regarding how to best represent tha group. There is no better example of how this maturation process works than that of the "women's movement." There is little divergence of opinion regarding the basic goal--equal opportunity for all women. The divergence has emerged over the appropriate techniques to be used to accomplish that goal. As one group (liberals) rose and claimed to be representative of "women's demands," another group (conservatives) entered the "movement" to counter their claims. Consequently, it is difficult now to attach any real meaning to the term "women" insofar as being a cohesive political group. "Women" have polarized into liberal and conservative groups on the basis of their socioeconomic backgrounds; there are those pushing for radical change and there are those defending the status quo as the mode of insuring equal opportunity. Each "side" claims to represent the majority of the women of this country.

In the Houston metropolitan area there are two large umbrella-type organizations, as well as a number of other groups not aligned with either of the larger organizations, which have emerged to represent "women." These groups can be placed on a political continuum ranging from the liberal Women's Rights Coordinating Council groups, to the moderate Women In Action groups, to the more conservative, independently-organized groups. (See Table 11.)

(Table 11 About Here)

TABLE 11

THE POSITIONING OF HOUSTON'S WOMEN'S GROUPS ON A POLITICAL CONTINUUM

Liberal Women's Rights Coordinating Council (n=41)	Moderate Women In Action (n=55)	Conservative Independent Groups (n=8)
American Jewish Committee	Alpha Kappa Alpha	Happiness of Women
American Association of University Women	Anna Dupre Coalition for Aging	Women Who Want to be Women
Greater Houston Interbranch Council	Antioch Baptist Church	Women Activated to Rescind and Stop the ERA
Clear Lake Chapter	Bellaire Christina Church Women's Fellowship	Committee to Restore Women's Rights
Montrose Area Chapter	Bellaire United Methodist Church Women	Life Advocates
North Harris County Chapter	B'nai B'rith Women's Council	Concerned Citizens of Westbury
Association for Women in Science	City Association of Women's Clubs	Citizens for Responsible Government
Black Women for Social Change	Delta Sigma Theta	Anti-Pornography Group
Business & Professional Women, San Jacinto Chapter	Dept. of Community Services on Aging	
Coalition of Labor Union Women	Dominican Sisters in Houston	
Federally Employed Women	Ethel Ransom Art & Literary Club	
Dallas Region	Friends of Youth Society, Inc.	
Abigail Adams	Friendly Twelve Club	
Greater Houston Area	Golden Age Hobby House	
Federal Women's Program Coordinator's Council	Good Samaritan Army	
First Unitarian Church, Women's Group	Harris Cty. Senior Citizen Nutrition Project	
*Harris County Women's Political Caucus	*Harris County Women's Political Caucus	
City of Houston--Health Department	Houston Area League for Nursing	
Houston Area Feminist Federal Credit Union	Houston Council on Human Relations	
Houston Breakthrough	Houston Frontiers Auxiliary	
Houston Rape Crisis Coalition	Houston Metropolitan Ministries	
Houston Women's Health Collective	Houston Teachers Association	
*League of Women Voters	Hunger Awareness Information League	
Lesberadas	Jack and Jill, Inc.	
*National Organization for Women	Julia C. Hester House Community Center	
Bay Area Chapter	League of United Latin American Citizens	
Houston Area Chapter	*League of Women Voters of Houston	
Montrose Chapter	Lily Grove Baptist Church	
Northwest Chapter	Married Ladies Charity Club	
Southwest Chapter	Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center	
*New Directions Clubs, Inc.	Mexican American Education Council	
*Panel of American Women	Mothers on the Move Society (MOMS)	
	National Council of Jewish Women	

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TABLE 11, Continued.

Liberal Women's Rights Coordinating Council (n=41)	Moderate Women in Action (n=55)	Conservative Independent Groups (n=8)
Point Blank Times	National Council of Negro Women	
Socialist Workers' Party	*National Organization for Women	
Stand Up Sisters Theatre Group	*New Directions Clubs, Inc.	
Texas Civil Liberties Union, Women's Rights Project	One America	
Texas Nurses Association, District 9	*Panel of American Women	
University Feminist Organization	Pinecrest Civic Club	
UH/CLC Women's Resources Services Center	Planned Parenthood Center	
Woman Rising Center	Professional United Leadership League	
Women's Equity Action League	St. Agnes Academy	
Women's Health and Society Faculty	St. John Baptist Church	
Zonta	St. Theresa Catholic Church (Social Services)	
Vocational Guidance Service	Scattergood Club	
	Sisterhood of Temple Emanuel	
	Texas Child Care '76	
	Top Ladies of Distinction	
	Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS)	
	Welfare Rights Organization	
	Wesley House Community Center	
	Women's Auxiliary to Houston Medical Forum	
	Women's Christian Home	
	Wright Grove Community Assistance Project	
	Young Women's Christian Association	

* Groups are members of both WRCC and WIA.

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The liberal Women's Rights Coordinating Council (WRCC) is composed of some 41 groups. It was originally established in December, 1976, as an advisory group to the then Women's Advocate for the City of Houston, Dr. Nikki Van Hightower. It is largely composed of relatively new, feminist-type organizations. On the other hand, the Women in Action organization is composed of some 55 groups, most of which are long-established service and civic type groups. They are generally more politically-moderate than the groups composing the WRCC. (A comparison of the WRCC and WIA membership lists turns up only five groups with overlapping memberships and three of the five are almost exclusively political organizations dependent on wide membership for their effectiveness, e.g. Harris County Women's Political Caucus, League of Women Voters, and National Organization of Women.) The more conservative women's groups active in the city include: Happiness of Women; Women Who Want to be Women; Women Activated to Rescind and Stop the ERA; Life Advocates; and the Committee to Restore Women's Rights (another anti-ERA group). These groups are relatively new groups formed to counter the activities of the feminist-type groups.

When the memberships of all three groups are aggregated (WRCC, WIA, conservative groups), it appears that there are at least 104 formally-organized groups in Houston alone that claim to be "women's groups." The diversity of women's groups and their polarization on political issues have made it extremely difficult to convince the elected official of the utility of strongly supporting any <u>one</u> "woman's issue."

The stimulus to the polarization of Houston's women activists (both liberal and conservative) were the events surrounding the career of the City's Women's Advocate, Nikki Van Hightower--a former political science professor at the University of Houston. (See Table 12.) Van Hightower, the City's second Women's

TABLE 12

DIVISIVENESS OVER "WOMEN'S ISSUES" IN HOUSTON, TEXAS:
MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE WOMEN'S ADVOCATE CONTROVERSY

Event & Issues	Liberal #	Liberal Groups Cited	Conservative #	Conservative Groups Cited
March 5, 1977 (Saturday) Equal Rights Amendment rally to commemorate International Women's Day; officially declared Women's Rights Day by Mayor Hofheinz; Van Hightower speaks	175	34 women's rights organizations: - NOW - HCWPC - Black Women for Social Change - University Feminist organization		
March 9, 1977 City Council meeting; citizen criticism of Van Hightower's appearance at IWD rally and her endorsement of ERA, abortion rights, & life style rights. Council voted 6-1 to ask Legal Dept. to prepare ordinance reducing salary from $18,400 year to $1 a year.	0	Comments solicited by press from: - NOW - League of Women Voters	7	- Concerned Citizens of Westbury (civic group); - Life Advocates - Committee to Restore Women's Rights (anti-ERA)
March 10, 1977 Formation of Advocates for Women's Advocate coalition	40 groups			
March 16, 1977 City Council meeting. Discussion of ordinance to reduce Van Hightower's salary; largest number ever to address council in one day. All except 4 were women.	55	- YWCA - City of Houston Affirmative Action Advisory Countil - Black Women for Social Change	51	Same as above
March 23, 1977 City Council meeting; discussion firing of Van Hightower	38		22	
March 28, 1977 Rally at City Hall sponsored Advocates for Women's Advocates	600			
All night vigil for Van High.	100			
March 29, 1977 Noon rally for Van Hightower	100			
Council votes to draft ordinance abolishing position (6-3)				
March 30, 1977 Council passes abolishment ordinance. Mayor reappoints Van Hightower as an affirmative action specialist with same duties				

TABLE 12, Continued

Event & Issues	Liberal #	Liberal Groups Cited	Conservative #	Conservative Groups Cited
January 5, 1978 New mayor, McConn, announced firing of Van Hightower at Rutary Club luncheon without informing her first. He alleged he had received "hundreds" of phone calls" against her and none for her.		Comments solicited from: -Women in Action -League of Women Voters -NOW		-Concerned Citizens of Westbury -Citizens for Responsible Government -Anti-Pornography Group

SOURCES: "ERA Supporters Hold Rally, Foes Chant Their Opposition," Houston Chronicle, March 6, 1977.

Fred Harper, "Women's Advocate Says She'll Quit if Salary Cut to $1," Houston Chronicle, March 10, 1977.

Fred Harper and Claudia Feldman, "City Attorney to Study Legality of Cutting Women's Advocate's Pay," Houston Chronicle, March 11, 1977.

John M. Crewdson, "Women's Advocate Now Fights Houston Council to Keep Her Job," The New York Times, March 12, 1977.

Fred Harper, "Council May End Van Hightower's Job," Houston Chronicle, March 17, 1977.

"Council Hears Women's Post Debate," Houston Post, March 24, 1977.

Fred Harper and Lori Rodriquez, "Women's Advocate Backlash: Van Hightower Backers Threaten Voter Reprisals Over Job Abolition Vote," Houston Chronicle, March 30, 1977.

"Month-Long Conflict With Advocate Ends," Houston Post, March 31, 1977.

Fred Harper and Phyllis Spittler, "Van Hightower Claims She Was Fired for Political Reasons," Houston Chronicle, January 6, 1978.

Advocate, took a much more visible profile than the former Women's Advocate. She was an outspoken advocate of liberaliy-defined women's rights (a woman's right to choose an abortion, passage of the ERA, and a woman's right to choose her own life-style). Specifically, it was her appearance at an Equal Rights Amendment rally held to commemorate International Women's Day which sparked a month-long controversy serving to unify and activate both liberal and conservative women's forces in the City.

The charges and countercharges thrown from each corner regarding whether the City Council should fire Van Hightower were evidence of the intensity of the socioeconomic cross-pressures operative on both groups of women. Van Hightower was accused by one group (Life Advocates) of "threatening the family unit by advocating abortion and the proposed ERA"[29] but was praised by another group (NOW) for "assisting in the fight for basic women's rights including the right to an abortion."[30] Likewise, she was accused by some of "not representing the views of a majority of women in Houston"[31] and commended by others for "representing a hefty majority of Americans supporting the basic goals of women's rights."[32] The near-equal number of "pro" and "con" speakers (Table 12) before City Council seemed to justify one woman's comment that "this issue is tearing this city apart. It is pitting woman against woman, family against family."[33] But more importantly, the controversy provides irrefutable evidence of the fact that religion, education, race, and other socioeconomic factors emerge as the most influential cross-pressures (as opposed to gender) at the stage in the political maturation process where a "movement's" membership begins to determine the means of achieving and insuring their goal (in this case, women's rights).

DIVERSITY IN ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES

The logical fallacies of assuming that only female officeholders can represent "women," so prevalent in much of the literature on women in politics,

are apparent upon examination of the activities of Houston women in city, county, and school district elections--their candidacy rates, political endorsements, and electoral success rates. The results of such analyses are evidence that the political maturation process works to move groups beyond defining representation solely in symbolic terms (a woman for the sake of a woman) to a definition of representation in terms of programmatic responses of the individual candidate (the promises of the candidate with regard to the distribution of a government's goods and services.) This occurs after the polarization of a group (in this case "women") has occurred and it is obvious that no longer can any one individual represent all members of the original group. An example of a politically-mature group which has reached the point of endorsing candidates on issue stances rather than gender, is the Harris County Women's Political Caucus (HCWPC). Included in this electoral analysis are their endorsement patterns.

The data show that women's candidacy rates vary from one local government to another as do the incidences of their running against each other in the same race. Female candidacy rates range from a high of 36% for school district elections to a low of 11% (Harris County elections) with the candidacy rate for City of Houston elections being 18%. Not so surprisingly, the incidence of women running against women parallels the candidacy rates. Women ran against women in three out of four school district races, one out of ten city races (the mayoral race), and in none of the six county races in which women candidates were entered.

The endorsement activities of the HCWPC also varied race-by-race, local government-by-local government. Of the seven female candidates running in city elections (Table 13), only three received the endorsement of the Caucus. Neither of the female candidates for mayor were endorsed even though one

(Table 13 About Here)

TABLE 13

CITY OF HOUSTON ELECTIONS, NOVEMBER, 1977: SUCCESS OF WOMEN CANDIDATES

Position	Number of Candidates	Number of Women Candidates	Women's Pol.Caucus Endorsement	Women Candidates' % of Total Vote	Final Rank of Women's Candidates
MAYOR	12	2		2.6%	
			No	(2.5)	5th
			No	(0.1)	12th (Last)
CITY COUNCIL					
District A	2	0	-	-	-
District B	3	0	-	-	-
District C	2	1	Yes	23.8%	2nd (Last)
District D	4	1	No	10.1%	4th (Last)
District E	1	0	-	-	-
Position 1	3	1	No	22.7%	2nd
Position 2	5	1	Yes	19.3	2nd
Position 3	1	0	-	-	-
CITY CONTROLLER	5	1	Yes	30.6% (general)	1st
				*58.5 (runoff)	1st
Total	38	7	3-Yes;4-No		

NOTE: * Winner, Kathryn J. Whitmire. First women ever elected to city office in Houston, Texas.

SOURCES: Houston Chronicle, November 9, 1977. Houston Post, November 23, 1977.

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of them was a member of the Caucus! Of the two endorsed for City Council seats, only one was a near-unanimous endorsement. The other was a rather half-hearted endorsement as a result of the candidate's comment that "she didn't need the women's caucus support." She also lost. Only one of the female candidates endorsed by the Caucus won--the candidate for City Controller, Kathryn Whitmire. (It should be pointed out that the controller's race, unlike the City Council races, had no incumbent in the running.) Whitmire became the first woman ever elected to office in the 140 year history of the City of Houston. However, while carrying the endorsement of the Caucus, Whitmire was careful never to portray herself as a "woman's candidate." As reported in the Houston Post the morning after her election, "Whitmire stood on her experience as a manager in a national CPA firm during her campaign and avoided aligning herself with causes, other candidates, or political organizations." [34] According to Whitmire, "The voters never cared that I was a woman. The only people who wanted to do that were some of the reporters."[35]

The success of female candidates was much higher for county elections than in city elections (Table 14). Five out of the six women candidates

(Table 14 About Here)

running were nominated. Again, however, the Caucus did not issue blanket endorsements on the basis of sex alone. As it turned out, three of the six women running did not receive the Caucus endorsement. Two of those not receiving the endorsement won nomination (the two running for county clerk--D and R). All three of the candidates receiving the Caucus endorsement also won nomination (two judgeships; one county party chairperson(D)).

Perhaps the most interesting are the endorsement patterns of the Caucus

TABLE 14

COUNTY OF HARRIS PRIMARY ELECTIONS, MAY, 1978: SUCCESS OF WOMEN CANDIDATES

Position/Party	Number of Candidates	Number of Women Candidates	Women's Pol.Caucus Endorsement	Women Candidates' % of Total Vote		Final Rank of Women's Candidates	
				1st	Runoff	1st	Runoff
Harris County Judge							
Democrat	4	0					
Republican	1	0					
Harris County Clerk							
Democrat	3	1	No	53.0%	-	1st	-
Republican	2	1	No	55.5%	-	1st	-
County Treasurer							
Democrat	6	1	No	20.7%	-	3rd	-
Republican	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
County Surveyor							
Democrat	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
Republican	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
County Commission, Pct. 2							
Democrat	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
Republican	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
County Commission, Pct. 4							
Democrat	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
Republican	1	0	-	-	-	-	-
County Party Chairman							
Democrat	4	1	Yes	28.5%	52.6%	2nd	1st
Republican	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
County Criminal Court # 6							
Democrat	7	1	Yes	40.5%	77.0%	1st	1st
Republican	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
County Criminal Court # 8							
Democrat	4	1	Yes	42.8	75.0	1st	1st
Republican	1	0	-	-	-	-	-

NOTE: Excluded are nine judicial races where there were no female candidates.

SOURCES: Houston Post, May 8, 1978. Harris County Clerk's office.

in the school district elections where women ran against each other in three out of four contests (Table 15). Of the eight females running,

(Table 15 About Here)

the Caucus endorsed only two, claiming that the others simply did not represent the Caucus' position on "women's issues." Neither won election. In one of the contests, District 5, they endorsed a male candidate where two female candidates were also running. The Caucus justified such a position, very pragmatically, on the grounds that a sympathetic man was preferable to a hostile woman. The Caucus had reached the stage of political maturity where they opted for programmatic representation rather than symbolic representation. They recognized the necessity of endorsing on the basic of programmatic promises rather than merely on the basis of the sex of the candidate. The value of such a stance is that it prevents a great deal of cognitive dissidence among the membership which can occur when women candidates run against each other and when socioeconomic pressures outweigh gender pressures (e.g. an unsympathetic female candidate). More importantly, such a stance enhances the credibility of the group in the eyes of the politicos they are trying to influence.

The significance of the varied level of support for women candidates is that women candidates obviously receive support from voters who share issue stances usually formed on the basis of socioeconomic similarities between themselves and the candidate whether it be race, ethnicity, social class, religion, etc. The more politically-seasoned "women's groups" have managed to obtain political power, or clout, by recognizing the importance of organizing groups of people who share common public policy goals and are committed to working for their passage. These groups have come to recognize that the fact that these people happen to be women is secondary to the politicos who are more impressed by political results than political rhetoric.

TABLE 15

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTIONS, NOVEMBER, 1977: SUCCESS OF WOMEN CANDIDATES

Position	Number of Candidates	Number of Women Candidates	Women's Pol.Caucus Endorsement	Women Candidates' % of Total Vote		Final Rank of Women's Candidates	
				1st	Runoff	1st	Runoff
District # 1	8	4		59.3%	49.7%		
		(1)	No	(19.7%)	(49.7%)	1st	2nd (Last)
		(2)	No	(16.5%)	-	3rd	-
		(3)	Yes	(12.3%)	-	4th	-
		(4)	No	(10.8%)	-	5th	-
District # 5	7	2		48.0%	54.6%		
		(1)	No	(39.1%)	(54.6%)	1st	1st
		(2)	No	(8.9%)	-	4th	-
District # 6	4	2		32.9%	-		
		(1)	Yes	(20.0%)	-	3rd	-
		(2)	No	(12.9%)	-	4th	-
District # 7	3	0	-	-	-	-	-

SOURCES: Houston Chronicle, November 9, 1977. Houston Post, November 23, 1977.

CONCLUSION

This research has shown why much of the previous research on women in politics cannot explain the increasing political polarization of "women." The earlier literature was largely based on the assumption that women would become the same type of cohesive political force as have racial, ethnic, and economic groups. Underneath this is, of course, the basic assumption that sex, or gender, would become the primary political cue supplanting socioeconomic cues such as race, social class, religion, education, etc. It has been shown here, however, that gender simply is not the primary voting cue for a substantial number of women and is not likely to ever become such. The political maturation of a group enhances rather than diminishes the weight of socioeconomic factors, relative to gender, as political cues.

Womanpower is simply not the same as "black" or "brown" power. Women as a group do not, and are not likely to have, a blatantly identifiable single bloc of votes deliverable in the same sense as do blacks and browns because gender is secondary to socioeconomic factors in the determination of individual political participatory activities. Woman power can be no more than political power directed toward specific areas of public policy by groups of people sharing common public policy goals--and the fact that these people happen to be "women" must be regarded as secondary.

Political scientists would do well to stop conceptualizing "women" as a political group of the same order as racial or ethnic groups and to instead focus their attention on why some groups of women are more influential in the policy-making process than others.

NOTES

[1] This polarization has been most evident with regard to the issues of abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and choice of life-style (lesbianism).

[2] V.O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, 5th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1964), p. 105.

[3] Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick, Political Woman (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 3.

[4] Examples of studies focusing on women's participation rates (candidacies, groups, voting behavior) at the national level include: Angus Campbell et al, The American Voter (New York: Wiley, 1960); Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965); Martin Gruberg, Women in American Politics (Oshkosh, Wisconsin: Academia Press, 1968); Kirsten Amudson, The Silenced Majority: Women and American Democracy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Kirkpatrick, op. cit.; Susan Tolchin and Martin Tolchin, Clout: Womanpower and Politics (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1974); Jane S. Jaquette, ed., Women in Politics (New York: John Wiley, 1974); William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Role, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); S.C. Bourque and J. Grossholtz, "Politics An Unnatural Practice: Political Science Looks at Female Participation," Politics and Society, 4 (Winter, 1974): 225-266; Marjorie Lansing, "The American Woman: Voter and Activist." in J.S. Jaquette, ed., Women in Politics, pp. 5-24; Kristi Andersen, "Working Women and Political Participation," American Journal of Political Science, 19 (August, 1975): 439-454; Barbara Deckard, The Women's Movement: Political, Socioeconomic, and Psychological Issues (New York: Harper and Row, 1975); Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation (New York: David McKay Co., 1975); Naomi Lynn, "Women in American Politics: An Overview," in Jo Freeman, ed., Women: A Feminist Perspective (Palo Alto, Ca.: Mayfield, 1975); Susan B. Hansen, Linda M. Franz, and Margaret Netemeyer-Mays, "Women's Political Participation and Policy Preferences," Social Science Quarterly, 56 (March, 1976): 576-590; Marianne Githens and J.L. Prestage, A Portrait of Marginality: The Political Behavior of the American Woman (New York: David McKay Co., 1977).

Examples of studies focusing primarily on the electoral successes of women nationwide include: Peggy Lanson, Few Are Chosen: American Women in Political Life Today (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968); E. Werner, "Women in Congress: 1917-1964," Western Political Quarterly, 19 (1966): 16-30; Charles S. Bullock and P.L.F. Heys, "Recruitment of Women for Congress: A Research Note," Western Political Quarterly, 25 (September, 1972): 416-423.

[5] Examples of studies focusing primarily on women's participation rates and electoral successes at the state level include: Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick, Political Woman, op. cit.; Emmy E. Werner, "Women in State Legislatures," Western Political Quarterly, 21 (1968): 40-50; Emmy E. Werner and Louise M. Bachtold, "Personality Characteristics of Women in American Politics," in J.S. Jaquette, ed., Women in Politics, op. cit., pp. 75-84; Irene Diamond, Sex Roles in the State House (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977);

and Marianne Githens, "Spectators, Agitators, or Lawmakers: Women in State Legislatures," in M. Githens and J. Prestage, eds., Portrait of Marginality, op. cit., pp. 196-219.

[6] Examples of studies focusing primarily on women's participation rates and electoral successes at the local level (county and city) include: Mary Cornelia Porter and Ann B. Matasar, "The Role and Status of Women in the Daley Organization," in J.S. Jaquette, ed., Women in Politics, op. cit., pp. 85-108; Albert K. Karnig and B. Oliver Walter, "Elections of Women to City Councils," Social Science Quarterly, 56 (March, 1976): 605-613; Lee Sigelman, "The Curious Case of Women in State and Local Government," Social Science Quarterly, 56 (March, 1976): 591-604; Ellen Boneparth, "Women in Campaigns: From Lickin' and Stickin' to Strategy," American Politics Quarterly, 5 (July, 1977): 289-300; Nikki R. Van Hightower, "The Recruitment of Women for Public Office," American Politics Quarterly, 5 (July, 1977): 301-314; and Marcia M. Lee, "Toward Understanding Why Few Women Hold Public Office: Factors Affecting the Participation of Women in Local Politics," in M. Githens and J. Prestage, Portrait of Marginality, op. cit., pp. 113-117.

[7] Kirkpatrick, p. 18.

[8] Chafe, op. cit.

[9] Hansen et al, op. cit.

[10] Ibid., p. 576.

[11] Questionnaires were submitted to 100 participants (August, 1977) in a federally-funded program entitled "Women in City and County Government" sponsored by the Continuing Education Center at the University of Houston. The purpose of the program was to increase the participants' understanding of local government. The participants volunteered to participate in the program indicating a higher level of political interest among the respondents than would be characteristic of the general population. Of the 75 respondents, 26 were employed in City government; 33 were employed in County government; 11 were employed in the community--non-governmental employees; and 5 were unemployed. The respondents came from a variety of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds.

[12] The office of Women's Advocate was created in 1974 by the liberal mayor, Fred Hofheinz. Van Hightower was the second person to hold that position. She was appointed in May, 1976 after the first occupant, Poppy Northcutt, resigned over what she termed "city Council's lack of concern for women's rights."

[13] An official's "attentive constituency" is composed of those persons in his/her constituency who follow and provide input into his/her activities. "Those who are politically attentive and active are not a random sample of the entire general public: They include disproportionately large numbers of those with the most income, most prestigious occupations, and largest amount of formal education." (Source: Demetrios Caraley, City Governments and Urban Problems (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 341.)

[14] M.C. Cummings, Jr. and D. Wise, Democracy Under Pressure, 3rd edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977), p. 197.

[15] The five county commissioners are elected from districts which are both geographically and population-wise larger than the districts represented by the five city council members running for geographically-defined district seats yet voted upon citywide. County districts, in comparison with city districts, diffuse or dilute the voting strength of minorities.

[16] See: Angus Campbell et al, The American Voter (New York: Wiley, 1960); Lester W. Milbrath, Political Participation (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965); Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Robert R. Alford and Eugene C. Lee, "Voting Turnout in American Cities," American Political Science Review, 62 (1968): 796-813; Howard D. Hamilton, "The Municipal Voter: Voting and Nonvoting in City Elections," American Political Science Review, 65 (1971): 1135-1140; and W.H. Flanigan and N.H. Zingale, Political Behavior of the American Electorate, 3rd edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1975).

[17] See Note 12.

[18] See Note 10.

[19] Caraley, p. 318.

[20] Cummings and Wise, p. 193.

[21] Caraley, op. cit.

[22] Ibid., p. 317.

[23] Ibid.

[24] See Note 10.

[25] Both the Houston Post (morning) and the Houston Chronicle (evening) devote more space to city politics than to county politics.